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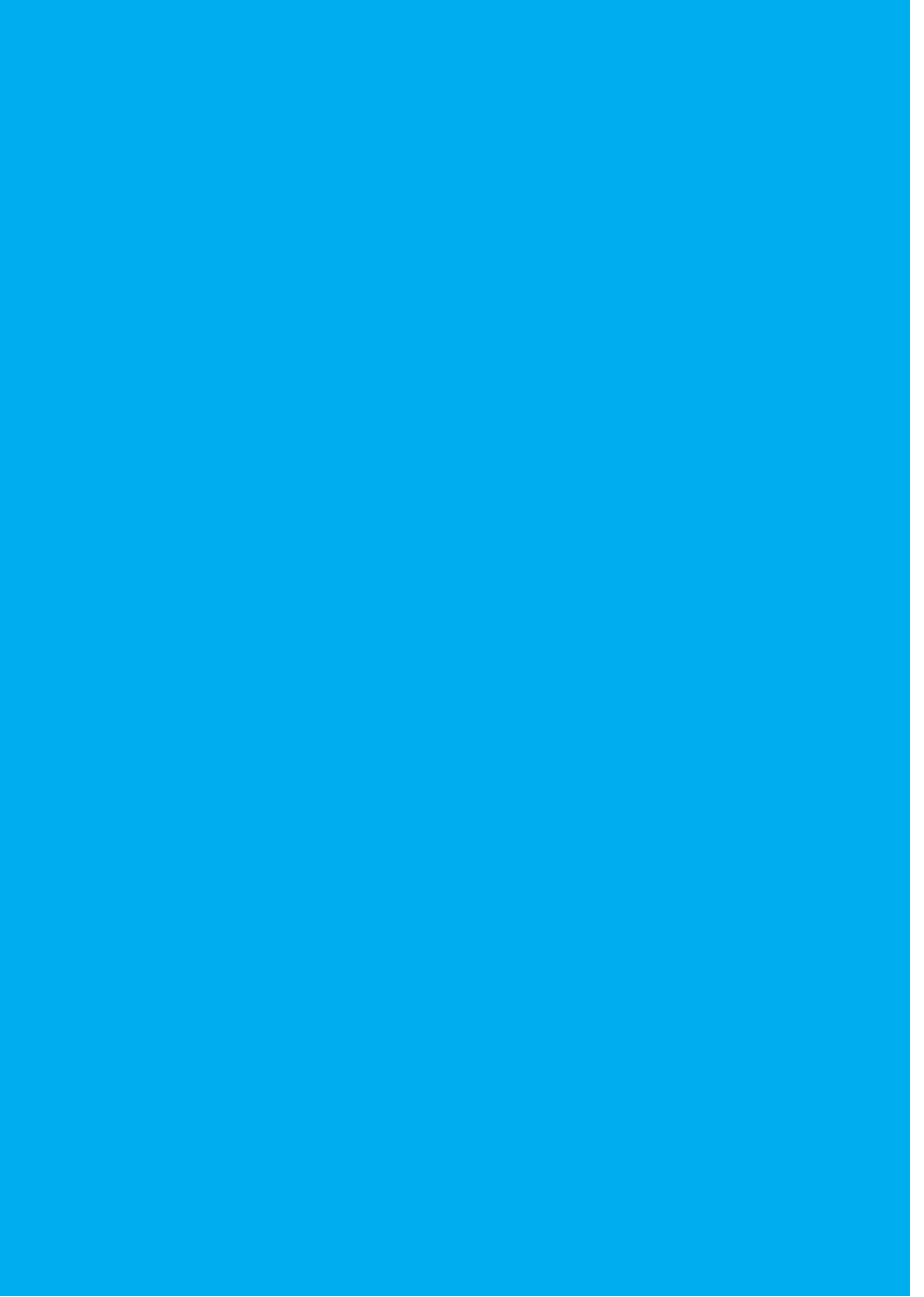
Session V: Democracies vs. the Rest in East Asia

Losing Leviathan? Strong-State Democratization in
Malaysia and Singapore

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Abstract

Enduring authoritarian stability in Malaysia and Singapore has largely been due to these countries' extraordinarily powerful state apparatuses. Strong states emerged well before both countries' authoritarian turns in the 1960s, and would continue to help stabilize national politics if Malaysia and Singapore were to undergo the sort of "strong-state democratization" that East Asia has witnessed in South Korea and Taiwan. Yet the same state strength that facilitates stable transitions to democracy also empowers authoritarian rulers to forestall democratization. The main reason democratization should go smoothly in Malaysia or Singapore is also the main reason it might not transpire at all.

Keywords: Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, democratization, authoritarianism, state power